

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

these three young men
of different attire, sizes, and hairstyles,
are sitting over tea and juices

under an umbrella on the food patio
of the l.a. city art museum,
and they are discussing, yes they are,
neither girlfriends, boyfriends, art, or sports,
but what kind of peanut butter they like best.

THE REVERSE P.R. MAN

over the years toad came to realize
that nobody enjoyed recognizing themselves
in his poems or stories,
even when, as was often the case,
he had been trying to compliment them.
thus, whenever something new came out,
his pleasure was tempered by the need
to make sure copies were not circulated
at home or around the office,
or in the neighborhood,
or where he grew up,
or where his wife might pick one up,
or his kids,
or, sometimes, even in certain foreign countries.
eventually he found he was spending more time
trying to make sure his works weren't read
by the wrong people
than most writers spend trying to assure
that somebody at least would read theirs.

SENDING A MESSAGE

picking up my highschool daughter
at her new boyfriend's house
i notice a barbell on the carpet
of the recreation room.
"pumping a little iron?" i say.
"a few curls," he says.
so i stroll over to position myself
in front of it
as my daughter cries,
"dad, your back, your heart, your
lungs, your everything!"
i lift it properly to the upright position
and crunch out two disciplined curls;

then set it cautiously back on the floor.
"very good , sir,"
the young man says.
i smile, shake his hand, and
head out to the car, happy that
i guessed correctly that it was a
weight i could still handle,
doing my best not to gasp, and
hoping it looked as if i could have
kept pumping away indefinitely.

ANOTHER SOCIAL INADEQUACY

a lot of times i don't look
people in the eyes when i'm talking
to them. i can tell this
bothers many of them because
they will frequently try to
force me to engage their gazes.
they'll go so far as to move around
me, bend over, crowd in, do everything
to create an angle at which i cannot
escape their faces. they probably
think i'm afraid of them. or that
i'm staring off into space because
i can think up better lies that way.

actually, i have simply found that
i think better this way. i'm not
distracted by anything about the
person i'm talking to. i can
concentrate on what exactly i want to
say and how exactly i can best
phrase it. so i was happy to read
in a recent new yorker profile
that bill gates, who founded microsoft
at the age of nineteen and is, at
thirty-nine, the second richest
man in the united states, shares this
habit of looking away while
thoughtfully preparing his responses.
and while he reserves the right to
guard what he deems essentially
private, he has a reputation for candor.

i suspect that those who are fond
of mouthing utterances such as. "i
like a man who will look me square in
the eye," are really just looking
for an opportunity to interrogate
and to intimidate. they're not
interested in the subtleties of